



Oregon State Chamber of Commerce

2015 Legislative Priorities

The 2015 OSCC Legislative Agenda represents the legislative priorities of the Main Street business community as represented by the 66 local Chambers of Commerce represented by the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce.

The OSCC is organized to support business growth, job growth and income growth in each of our local communities, many of which have not realized the economic gains seen in the Portland/Metro Area in recent years.

We believe a healthy business climate, and the jobs that such a business climate creates, is the key to building up our local communities and making them prosperous.

The 2015 OSCC Legislative Agenda reflects our belief that state government can be a valuable partner in helping our local communities grow and prosper. But the tens of thousands of businesses that belong to our local chambers also caution the Oregon Legislature against enacting counter-productive policies that would effectively block our ability to create jobs and more prosperous communities.

The OSCC Legislative Agenda is equal parts proactive and defensive. We recognize there are many threats to small and Main Street business viability that will emerge from the 2015 Oregon Legislature, but we are also optimistic that the Legislature will see the wisdom in promoting business growth in all corners of the state and will pursue an agenda that elevates all local communities and sets the stage for long term growth and prosperity in every community across Oregon.

The OSCC Opportunity Agenda for Local Business and Communities includes:

1. **Transportation Investments.** OSCC will be supportive of efforts to create a comprehensive transportation infrastructure funding package paid for by an increase in the state gas tax. OSCC is also supportive of efforts to revitalize and leverage federal dollars to repair local airports across Oregon through an increase in the jet fuel tax or through bonding. Finally, OSCC supports multi-modal transportation investments through a Connect Oregon bonding package.
2. **Expansion of Small Business Tax Cut.** The 2013 Special Session of the Oregon Legislature recognized the need to create a lower tax rate for small business pass-through entities (S corps, LLCs, etc). OSCC not only seeks to protect this rate cut for existing employers, but to expand it for the smallest businesses that are sole proprietors or have only part-time employees. We also support common-sense small business tax provisions such as connecting to the federal tax code for consistent expensing and depreciation laws.



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3. **Natural Resource Utilization.** The Governor allocated \$30 million in his budget to put in place the infrastructure to add storage capacity for water from the Columbia River. This not only has immediate ramifications for local communities in NE Oregon, but it has future benefits for agriculture and food production statewide. OSCC also supports innovative projects such as the Urban Forestry Co-op pilot project for Clackamas County that will create local wood supplies that can be harvested and milled and turned into building materials locally.
4. **Career & Technical Education/Workforce Development.** OSCC supports initiatives that enhance the existing pool of skilled workers, including on-the-job training. OSCC supports initiatives that enhances the skills of incumbent workers, matches job skills to current employer needs, and continues or enhances funding for Career & Technical Education programs.
5. **Local Community Development & Tourism.** OSCC supports efforts to revitalize our local communities through tourism. OSCC also supports specific efforts to revitalize our local communities, such as the Revitalize Main Street Act, which provides a 25% rebate for certified rehabilitation of historic commercial buildings in communities throughout Oregon. Such a proposal would generate 1,300 local jobs and \$25 million in additional local income. OSCC will also support legislation to encourage local brownfields redevelopment as well as increase the supply of industrial land that can support business and job growth.

The OSCC Defensive Agenda for Local Business and Communities includes:

1. **Expansion of Business Mandates & Regulation.** The small business community, particularly in rural Oregon, cannot sustain the cost of a paid sick leave mandate without further compromising our rural job base. OSCC opposes expansion of the Portland paid sick leave mandate to all Oregon businesses. Small employers all across Oregon develop their own workable sick leave policies every day without costly and impractical government mandates. A paid sick leave mandate not only represents a new 3% payroll tax for small business, but even worse it has the effect of overriding a small business's employee attendance policies. OSCC is also highly skeptical of redundant "pay equity" mandate proposals that shift the burden of proof to employers and additional leave laws that add to Oregon's already generous workplace leave provisions.
2. **Increased taxes on businesses & individuals.** Oregon's general fund is projected to grow at an 11% rate for the 2015-17 biennium. OSCC believes there is not a compelling need for additional resources from the business community or individual Oregonians. Oregon's income, investment, and business income tax rates are already among the highest in the United States. Our local communities cannot withstand further discouragement of investment and punitive taxes on mobile income.



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3. **Low Carbon Fuel Standard.** The low-carbon fuel additives needed to achieve this mandate are not commercially available for Oregon consumers in adequate supplies. The Clean Fuels Program will effectively translate into significant increases in fuel costs as the Oregon mandate will create demand for a product in extremely limited supply. Our local communities today are just starting to realize the benefits of more disposable income due to lower fuel costs. To deny our communities of this disposable income by artificially driving the cost of fuel back up with this costly mandate will hurt local communities. We also oppose this mandate because it will drive up fuel costs and not put any money into our transportation infrastructure.
4. **State-run retirement plan for private sector employers/employees.** There are thousands of retirement products available to our local small businesses and their employees, and sold by our local small businesses. The addition of one state-run retirement plan as a solution to our state's retirement savings crisis is both disingenuous and dangerous. It's dangerous because a state-run plan will have no more benefit than any of the 10,000+ privately managed plans in existence today unless it is mandated for Oregon employers, which is what we fear is the ultimate goal for this proposal.
5. **Increased minimum wage beyond current law annual CPI increases.** Oregon's minimum wage law is already fair. Already one of the highest minimum wage rates in the nation, Oregon's minimum wage increases each and every year based on the Portland CPI. Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, or even \$12 per hour, will have the effect of immediate and significant job loss, especially among young and low-skilled workers, and will further hurt the ability of small business to compete with big businesses that can afford to pay higher wages or businesses in other states that do not have similar wage laws.